

23rd December 2020.

This act of worship has been prepared for you to use while you are unable to attend worship in a church building. It is a Carol Service so you are invited to find the Bible readings and as you read them to hear the message of God with us.



Call to Worship

In towns and villages
In tower blocks and terraces
Christ is waiting to be born

In palaces and shanty-towns
In high streets and back-streets
Christ is waiting to be born

In the vastness of the universe
In the intimacy of our hearts
Christ is waiting to be born

Come, Lord Jesus
Come into our homes
Come into our lives
Come and stay

Ruth Burgess, from *Candles & Conifers*

CAROL Once in Royal David's City

Once in royal David's city
Stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her Baby
In a manger for His bed:
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little Child.

He came down to earth from heaven,
Who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable,
And His cradle was a stall;
With the poor, and mean, and lowly,
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.

And our eyes at last shall see Him,
Through His own redeeming love;
For that Child so dear and gentle
Is our Lord in heaven above,
And He leads His children on
To the place where He is gone.

Not in that poor lowly stable,
With the oxen standing by,
We shall see Him; but in heaven,
Set at God's right hand on high;
When like stars His children crowned
All in white shall wait around

Cecil Francis Alexander

Prayer

Gracious God, we give you thanks and praise for
Jesus Christ our Lord:
for he was the word before all creation.
Through him all things come to be,
not one thing has its being but through him.

Jesus, light of the world,
we worship and adore you.

His life is the light that shines in the dark,
a light that darkness cannot overpower.

Jesus, light of the world,
we worship and adore you.

The Word was the true light coming into the
world.

He was in the world
that had its being through him,
and the world did not know him.

Jesus, light of the world,
we worship and adore you.

He came to his own, and they did not accept him.
But to all who accept him
he gives power to become children of God.

Jesus, light of the world,
we worship and adore you.

The Word was made flesh and lived among us,
and we have seen his glory,
as the only Son of the Father,
full of grace and truth.

Jesus, light of the world,
we worship and adore you.

To God our creator,
born as one of us,
be all praise and glory.
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Source unknown

The Lord's Prayer

Genesis 3: 8–15; 17–19

God tells sinful Adam that he has lost the life of Paradise and that his seed will bruise the serpent's head.

Genesis 22: 15–18

God promises to faithful Abraham that in his seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

CAROL O come, O come, Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel*

O come, O come, O Lord of might
Who to your tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times did give the law
In cloud and majesty and awe:

Oh come, O Rod of Jesse, free
Your own from satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell your people save,
And give them victory or the grave:

O come, O Key of David, come
and open wide our heavenly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery:

O come, O Day-Spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by your advent here
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's dark shadows put to flight

Latin 18th Century
Translated by John Mason Neale

Isaiah 9: 2; 6–7

The prophet foretells the coming of the Saviour.

Isaiah 11: 1–3a; 4a; 6–9

The peace that Christ will bring is foreshown.

CAROL The Angel Gabriel from Heaven came

The Angel Gabriel from heaven came,
his wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame:
'All hail,' said he thou lowly maiden Mary,
'most highly favoured lady!' Gloria!

"For known a blessed Mother thou shalt be,
All generations laud and honour thee.
thy Son shall be Immanuel, by seers foretold,
"Most highly favoured lady." Gloria!

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head:
'To me be as it pleaseth God,' she said,
'My soul shall laud and magnify his holy name.'
Most highly favoured lady! Gloria!

Of her, Immanuel - the Christ - was born
in Bethlehem, upon that Christmas morn.
And Christian folk throughout the world will ever
say,
'Most highly favoured lady! Gloria!'

Sabine Baring-Gould

Gospel of Luke 1: 26–35; 38

The angel Gabriel salutes the Blessed Virgin Mary.

CAROL O little town of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth,
the everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King,
and peace to all the earth!
For Christ is born of Mary;
And, gathered all above
While mortals sleep, the Angels keep
Their watch of wandering love.

How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming,
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him still
the dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray,
cast out our sin, and enter in,
be born in us today!
We hear the Christmas angels
the great glad tidings tell.
O come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Emmanuel.

Philip Brookes

Luke 2: 1; 3-7

St Luke tells of the birth of Jesus.



Luke 2: 8-16

The shepherds go to the manger.

CAROL Love shone down

I had a dream that I was standing on a hillside,
And all the lights of town were shining far below,
When up in the air beautiful voices
Sing a new song, let everyone know.

*Oh and Love shone down
Over the hills and over the valleys,
Oh and Love shone down over the world.*

Somebody spoke to me,
I knew it was an angel.
He said: 'There's something that I think you ought
to know.'
Then he just smiled, said: 'Don't be afraid now,
Sing a new song, let everyone know.'

And then he told me all about the baby Jesus,
How to find him, where exactly I should go.
Then he was joined by millions of others,
Sing a new song, let everyone know.

Andy Piercy and C S de Whalley

Matthew 2: 1-12

The wise men are led by the star to Jesus.

CAROL Unto us a boy is born

Unto Us A Boy Is Born ,
King of all creation:
Cradled in a stall was He,
The Lord of every nation,

Cradled in a stall was he
With sleepy cows and asses;
But the very beasts could see
That He all folk surpasses.

Herod then with fear was filled:
'A prince', he said, 'In Jewry!'
All little boys be killed
At Bethl'em in his fury.

Now may Mary's Son, who came
So long ago to love us,
Lead us all with hearts aflame
Unto the joys above us.

Omega and Alpha He!
Let the organ thunder,
While the choir with peals of glee
Doth rend the air asunder.

Percy Dearmer

Intercessions

As we think of the Christ child and his family at
the heart of the Christmas story, we pray for
those children who do not feel part of a family
this Christmas, who may be feeling lonely, afraid,
sad or betrayed. The light shines in the darkness

And the darkness shall not overcome it

We pray for families where Christmas can be a difficult time, endured rather than enjoyed; too costly both in money and emotions; a time of painful memories or lost opportunities. The light shines in the darkness

And the darkness shall not overcome it

We pray for children and families who because of ill health or disability; poverty, poor housing or problems at home are not looking forward to Christmas. The light shines in the darkness

And the darkness shall not overcome it

We live in a world which often forgets joy and hope, forgiveness and peace once Christmas is over. We give thanks for all who keep the light of your love for your people and your world alive all year round. Especially we give thanks for

The light shines in the darkness

And the darkness shall not overcome it. Amen

John 1: 1–14

St John unfolds the great mystery of the Incarnation

CAROL O come all ye faithful

O come, all ye faithful,
joyful and triumphant,
come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
come and behold him
born the king of angels:

*O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord!*

True God of true God,
Light of Light eternal,
lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb;
Son of the Father,
begotten, not created:

See how the shepherds
summoned to his cradle,
leaving their flocks, draw nigh to gaze;
we too will thither
bend our joyful footsteps:

Lo! star-led chieftains,
Magi, Christ adoring,
offer him incense, gold and myrrh;
we to the Christ-child
bring our hearts' oblations:

Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation,
sing all ye citizens of heaven above,
'Glory to God,
glory in the highest':

Latin, 18th Century

John Francis Wade and others

Blessing

May he, who by his incarnation
Gathered into one things earthly and heavenly,
fill your lives with his light and joy and peace;
And the blessing of God,
the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit,
remain with you always. **Amen**

GOD
IS WITH
you
me
us
▶

The CCLI number 176885